

More Words on Foreignization and Domestication—Dealing with Cultural Elements in Advertising Translation

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Abstract: In view of the target readers' different economic, social, political and cultural backgrounds, domestication, which is aimed at better cross-cultural communication, is usually the choice, in order to achieve the purpose of successful sales promotion by easing the reader's burden in understanding, when dealing with cultural elements in advertising translation, as argued by some scholars in China from the perspectives of the Skopos Theory, the Adaptation Theory and the Functional Equivalence Theory. While the author believes that domestication is the choice in most cases of advertising translation, she holds that the appropriate choice of strategy for the translation of a particular ad should be made in accordance with the specific translation context and advocates that more research should be conducted on foreignization, which, if appropriately employed, will contribute to greater sales promotion.

1. Introduction

According to the American Marketing Association (AMA), advertising is the non-personal communication of information usually paid for and usually persuasive in nature about products, services or ideas by identified sponsors through various media. Thus, advertising is about information transmission (informative function) and its purpose is to influence the public mass's behaviour and persuade them to take action (vocative function, which is the foremost function of advertising). If the purpose of advertising is to introduce and sell products to foreign consumers, translation influence on the target language consumers must be taken into consideration so as to successfully attract and convince potential consumers and persuade them to purchase the products. Thus the purpose or function of commercial advertising translation is to win over the maximum number of consumers in the target foreign market in the shortest possible time so as to achieve the maximum sales promotion without much consideration for giving the reader enough time to study the cultural elements in the translated Ad. In view of the target readers' different economic, social, political and cultural backgrounds, different thinking modes and different speaking habits, domestication, which is aimed at better cross-cultural communication, is usually the choice when dealing with cultural elements in advertising translation, in order to achieve the purpose of successful sales promotion by easing the target readers' burden in understanding foreign cultural elements, as argued by some scholars in China from such perspectives as the Skopos Theory, the Adaptation Theory and the Functional Equivalence Theory.

While the author believes that domestication is the choice in most cases of advertising translation, she holds that the appropriate choice of strategy for the translation of a particular ad should be made in accordance with the specific translation context and advocates that more research should be conducted on foreignization, which, if appropriately employed, will contribute to greater sales promotion. According to the Skopos Theory, a translational action is determined by its purpose and purpose varies according to the text receiver^[1], which largely determines which translation strategy is most appropriate. A translated text cannot be successful without the full involvement of **the reader**. The success or failure of a translation is ultimately decided by whether it can be interpreted successfully by **the target recipient** in a manner that is consistent with what is expected of

it.^[2] According to Reception Aesthetics, readers with different social classes, breeding and social backgrounds have different horizons of expectations, so when dealing with cultural elements in advertising translation, the translator must first decide for what readers the ad is translated and foresee the horizon of expectations of the target consumers before he has the most appropriate choice of translation strategy. This paper is thus an attempt to discuss how to decide on the translation strategy in accordance with such specific considerations as the power differentials between the source culture and the target culture, the poetic and ideological environment in which the target consumers live, the educational background of the target consumers, the power differentials between the source economy and the target economy, the consumption psychology of the target consumers, and to explore the causes for domestication and, especially, foreignization in advertising translation, based on the *Skopos* Theory, Reception Aesthetics, cultural translation studies, consumption psychology and advertising aesthetics.

2. Power Differentials between the Source Culture and the Target Culture

Here the discussion of foreignization and domestication from the perspective of power differentials is not an ethical one, which should be left to the discussion in literary translation. Venuti also said that his discussion of foreignization and domestication in an cultural and ethical sense is not applicable to applied translation^[3]. In advertising translation, the purpose of which is to achieve successful sales promotion, domestication is the choice of strategy in most cases when the source culture is a weak one while the target culture is a strong one and appropriate foreignization can contribute to higher sales promotion when the source culture is a strong one while the target culture is a weak one. This is because, since the Second World War, a lot of translation has been done from strong cultures to weak cultures while comparatively quite a little of translation has been done from weak cultures to strong cultures with domestication being the dominant strategy. This makes people in weak cultures have much more knowledge of strong cultures than people in strong cultures do weak cultures; also people in weak cultures show more interest in strong cultures than people in strong cultures do weak cultures. So when dealing with cultural elements in advertising translation, domestication can make things easier for the target consumers in strong cultures by corresponding to their horizon of expectations and appropriate foreignization can make products more attractive to the target consumers in weak cultures by catering to their aesthetic expectations.

3. Poetic and Ideological Environment in Which the Target Consumers Live

When the target culture is open to foreign cultures, there can be, in advertising translation, more foreignizing translation because people in this culture have a stronger tendency towards foreignness. This can be illustrated by the example of China. In 1978, China began to reform and adopted the policy of opening to the outside world. A new ideology was then formed and the interior order of literary production underwent a big reform subsequently. The government was less responsible for supporting the publishing house and the readers' market became the major leader in the field of writing and translating of literary works. Such a transformation was an indication that the role of the patronage was tied with commercial value and there developed a new poetic requirement that literary works should cater to the taste of the reading public, who were not satisfied any more with the revolutionary works published before the mid of 1980s. Thus, there was a boom of translation of western literary works, which brought new poetic forms, expressions, styles, etc. Influenced by western thought, Chinese readers in the 1990s wanted to read translated literary works with their original flavors unchanged. The patrons had to take into consideration this poetic and ideological requirement; thus many western literary works have been translated into Chinese by foreignizing strategy since the 1990s. By now, Chinese people's interest in foreignness has been much aroused and their ability to absorb foreignness has been much improved. In such a poetic and ideological environment, Chinese translation of western cultural elements in advertising by foreignizing strategy without overweighing the average readers' burden in understanding will definitely meet the aesthetic

expectations of the Chinese consumers and make the product go more quickly in the Chinese market.

4. Educational Background of the Target Consumers

According to the *Skopostheorie*, “the end justifies the means” and “the *Skopos* can be described as a ‘variable of the receiver’”^[1]. For different groups of potential consumers with different educational backgrounds, namely, with different ability to absorb foreignness, translators should adopt different translation strategies.

Luxun holds that when we translate, the first thing to consider is what kind of readers we are translating for. He classified readers into three groups: 1) well-educated; 2) those who are not well-educated but can read; 3) the nearly illiterate.^[4] His advocacy of “literal translation” is just directed at the “well-educated” readers. Fu Sinian classified readers of the target text into two groups, namely, common readers and scholars ^[5]and Mao Dun, too, grouped readers into two groups: common readers and literary apprentices.^[6] With the increase of the number of readers receiving higher education, Qin Hongwu divided the actual readers into two categories: professional readers and common readers^[7] Though there exist some differences between their classification of actual readers, they have one point in common: translators should take into consideration the potential readers’ horizon of expectations before selecting the most appropriate strategy when doing literary translation. This is also true of advertising translation, especially when dealing with cultural elements. When a product is particularly targeted at highly-educated consumers, namely, who have great ability to absorb foreignness, foreignizing translation can contribute to more sales promotion by giving these consumers a feeling of self-awareness and self-realization, and when a product is targeted at generally-educated consumers as well as highly-educated ones or only generally-educated consumers, domesticating translation should be a better choice for quick and high sales promotion by easing the burden of the majority of the target consumers in understanding. In short, for different groups of potential consumers with different educational backgrounds, translators should adopt different translation strategies when dealing with cultural elements in advertising translation.

5. Power Differentials between the Source Economy and the Target Economy

Foreignizing translation of advertisements, especially brand names, can make products made in developed countries more eye-catching to the target consumers in developing countries by catering to their aesthetic expectations. This is because modern people worship modernization and people in developing countries show great interest in products made in developed ones; also, the potential consumers of products made in developed countries, which are more costly than domestic products, are mostly those who have received high education, thus having more tendency toward foreignness. By contrast, domesticating translation can make the product made in developing countries go more quickly in the market of developed ones by conforming to the directed expectations of the target consumers. This is because when people in developed countries show interest in products made in developing ones, it is usually because of the competitive prices and the potential consumers are largely in lower income bracket, most of whom show no tendency or have no ability to absorb weak cultures. But if the target consumers do have strong desire for weak cultures, foreignizing translation can be a better choice.

6. Consumption Psychology of the Target Consumers

The general aim of advertising translation is to evoke the target consumers’ response and finally cause their actual purchase. Thus the target consumers’ consumption psychology should deserve much attention of the translator, especially when translating brand names, of which an important function is to arrest consumers’ immediate attention at the first sight.

7. Going for Novelty

From the perspective of psychology, modern people tend to go for novelty and a novel brand name attracts consumers and gives them a deep and lasting impression. Foreignizing translation, by making the translated brand names sound exotic, can arouse the target consumers' immediate interest in the product, thus leading to immediate purchase. But when doing foreignizing translation, translators shouldn't go too far and should first take into consideration the age group of the target consumers and the power differentials between the source culture and economy and the target culture and economy. Foreignizing translation of brand names in consideration of the target consumer's consumption psychology works well when the target consumers are young and are open to exotic things, and it works better when translating from strong culture and economy to weak culture and economy than vice versa.

8. Aesthetic Experience

Professor Zhu Fenggang, who has successfully saved the overall image of Taiwan beer industry from being disfigured, concluded that brand promotion is a process from "AIDA" (Awareness, Image, Difference, Association) to "AIDAL" (Awareness, Image, Difference, Association and Loyalty), which is an indication of the change of consumers' attitude towards a product. Professor Zhu holds that consumers will be loyal to a product if its name can achieve aesthetic effect. That's also what deserves attention in translation of brand names. Translated brand names which evoke aesthetical association can help to win more potential consumers. According to Zhu Guangqian, the things that we see everyday seldom bring us aesthetic experience because they are so familiar to us that they undermine our aesthetic experience.^[8] Domesticating translation, which makes the translated brand names so familiar to the readers by replacing the cultural features of the source language with the ones in the target language, will definitely damage the aesthetic experience of the target consumers. Foreignizing translation, by contrast, by keeping foreign cultural elements, that is, by keeping aesthetic distance between the readers' horizon of expectations and that of the translated brand name, will definitely create for the consumers a kind of fresh aesthetic experience.

9. Celebrity Effect

Some products get popular by virtue of the influence of relevant celebrities, and naming products after celebrities makes people believe that the maker guarantees the quality. Foreignizing translation, by keeping the name of a famous person, can take full advantage of celebrity effect, thus leading to more actual purchase. By contrast, if the names of such products are translated by domesticating strategy, the products may lose their potential consumers. This is especially true when the potential consumers of such products as perfumes and sports articles are fans of relevant celebrities.

10. Trend of Advertising Translation Strategy

The functions of advertising are mainly to attract the attention and interest of the potential consumers and persuade them to take actions. Although in most cases, domesticating method can achieve success in translation, the proper use of foreignizing translation can bring better results.

With the acceleration of cross-cultural communication, people's knowledge of foreign cultures has been much enriched. With the gain to their ability to absorb foreign cultures, translated literary works totally by domesticating method can not satisfy readers' horizon of expectations, especially their creative expectations, and foreignizing translation will gradually become the dominant strategy in the world of literary translation. Moreover, in the post-colonial context, there will be more and more "resistance" translation of literary works from weak cultures (with weak economic and political power) to strong cultures (with strong economic and political power) in order to resist cultural hegemony, and foreignizing translation will also be the dominant strategy when translating from strong cultures to weak cultures in order to achieve better cultural exchange and revitalize weak cultures and when translating between weak cultures in order to enrich each other. Thus, readers'

horizon of expectations will be enriched with more encounters with foreign literary work translated by foreignizing strategy. In the time of globalization, when foreign cultural and linguistic elements become part of our life, appropriate foreignizing translation will play an increasingly important role in advertising translation. What business translators should do is to research into, by means of marketing survey, on what occasions and to what degrees foreignizing translation can contribute to higher sales promotion.

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